A Birdhouse With Country Charm

Made from scraps of vinyl siding and wood, this birdhouse is economical and as down-home as it gets.

THIS CLEVER "bird barn" is sure to add a touch of the country to your backyard, whether it's in the city or along a rural back road.

Harlan Olson of Manitowoc, Wisconsin has given away dozens of these birdhouses. To his surprise, some of the recipients refuse to hang them outdoors.

"They say they're too nice to put outside," Harlan chuckles. "So they keep them inside for decoration."

Harlan designed the barn-style birdhouse in 1997, when a contractor was putting new vinyl siding on his house. "I asked him to leave the scraps behind, figuring I'd think of some use for them," he recalls. "Eventually, I came up with this birdhouse pattern that worked with the leftover siding.

"I made four or five barns from the stuff and gave them to relatives. Later, my nephew tore down a shed and had a bunch of extra siding. I really got busy building!"

Since then, Harlan has built nearly 50 of these barns and was getting ready to make "another 10 or 20" when we spoke to him.

He painted the first houses he made red, but now Harlan's tinkering with different shapes and designs. "The possibilities are endless," he says.

Your possibilities are endless, too. You can paint the birdhouse barn-red, develop your own color scheme or perhaps find some scraps of real weathered barn wood.

However, we recommend using light-colored siding or painting dark siding a light color before assembling. This will help keep the house cooler for the birds inside when the sun is shining.

When you're finished, go ahead and hang the birdhouse outside—no matter how pretty it is! The birds will love its country decor.

(Step-by-step instructions begin on next page)

Here's What You'll Need...

- ❑ One 2-foot 1-inch x 10-inch No. 2 pine board
- ❑ 20 inches of double 4-inch vinyl siding
- ❑ 1-1/4-inch galvanized deck screws
- ❑ 1-1/4-inch wire brads
- ❑ 1/4-inch dowel (optional for perch)
- ❑ Glue stick
- ❑ Two screw eyes and chain for hanging the birdhouse

Recommended Tools...

- ❑ Table saw
- ❑ Saber saw
- ❑ Utility knife
- ❑ Hot-melt glue gun (optional)
- ❑ Hand saw
- ❑ Power drill
- ❑ Router (optional)

Time to Raise the Barn!

1. Begin by making two copies of the full-size pattern shown at right—one for the front of the birdhouse and one for the back. Cut the paper patterns out with a scissors about 1/2 inch outside the guidelines.

2. If you like the optional router cuts pictured on the front of the barn, it's important to make them *before* cutting the front and back pieces from the pine board.

To do this, lay the patterns on a 2-foot-long piece of 1-inch x 10-inch pine, making sure the grain runs horizontally. Lightly trace the pattern onto the wood, then mark where you'd like to route the grooves.

If you don't have a router or just want to keep things simple, move on to the next step.

3. Use a glue stick or spray adhesive to affix the patterns to the 1-inch x 8-inch board, but apply it sparingly so they'll peel off easily later. Again, make sure the grain runs horizontally. (See "Workshop Wisdom" on page 103 for a helpful hint.)

4. Cut out the front and back pieces with a saber saw or band saw. It might be tempting to cut the board in half and stack the two pieces of wood to cut them both at once, but we don't recommend it—most saber saws are made to cut material 1 inch thick or less.

Your cuts must be precise for the vinyl siding to fit properly. Cut carefully along the guideline, then peel off the pattern. If any adhesive remains on the wood, remove it by lightly sanding.

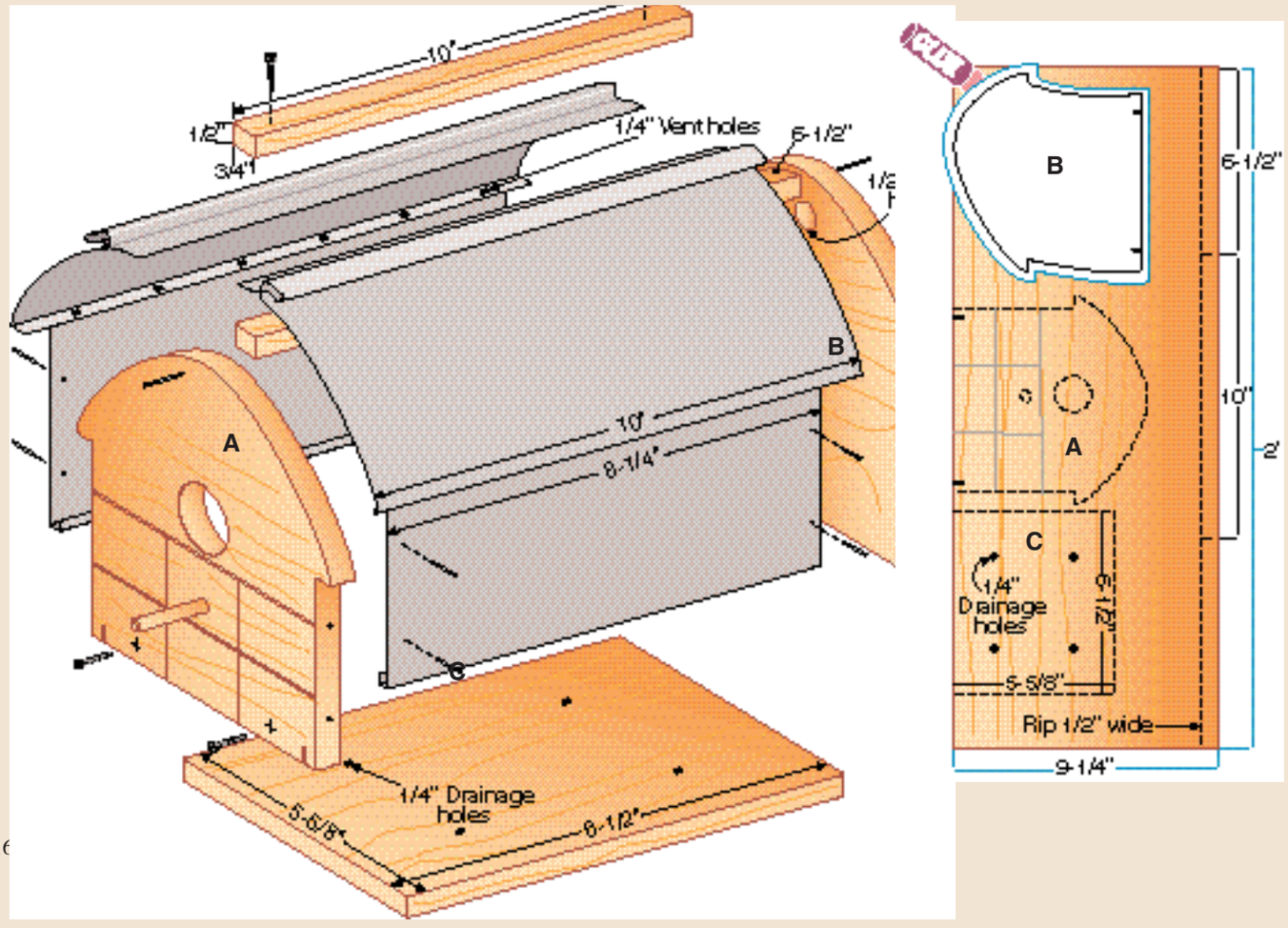
5. On the bottom edge of the front and back pieces, make a 5/16-inch deep cut with a hand saw, 1/4 inch in from each corner. The bottom edge of the siding will fit into this slot.

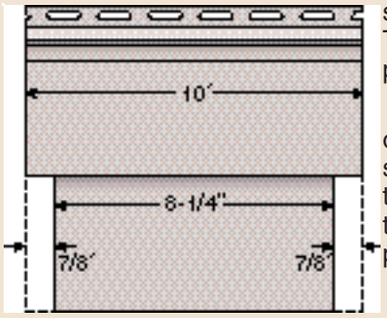
6. Drill the entrance hole with a spade bit to a size appropriate for the type of bird you'd like to attract. (See page 39 for recommended hole sizes.) If you'd like an optional perch, drill a 1/4-inch hole 1 inch below the entrance hole. Cut a 3-inch piece of 1/4-inch dowel and glue it into the hole.

7. From the remaining pine board, cut a piece 5-5/8 inches x 6-1/2 inches for the floor. Predrill holes through the front and back pieces and into the floor board and secure it with 1-1/4-inch deck screws. (After nesting season, when it's time to clean out the birdhouse, remove the screws and the floor.) Add 1/4-inch drainage holes in the floor and vent holes under the barn eaves. Also add a 1/2-inch vent hole near the top of the back piece.

8. Rip a 2-foot 3/4-inch x 1/2-inch strip from the pine board. Cut two pieces from it—one 6-1/2 inches long (the inside roof beam) and another 10 inches long (the outside roof beam). Glue the inside roof beam to the front and back pieces and attach with 1-1/4-inch wire brads nailed through the front and back to hold it in place. Lay the outside roof beam aside.

9. Cut two pieces of double 4-inch vinyl siding into 10-inch lengths. (It's really 8 inches from top to bottom, but has two 4-inch sections molded into it.) Trim only the bottom 4-inch section with a utility knife to "indent" it 7/8 inch on each end. (The finished width of the bottom section





should be 8-1/4 inches.) The wider top section provides an overhang.

10. Slip the bottom lip of the siding into the slots, then fasten the bottom sections of the siding to the front and back pieces with wire brads.

11. Roll the siding so each piece meets and overlaps at the peak of the roof. To help hold them in place, tack with hot-melt glue. Then place the outside roof beam into the channel formed by the siding as it meets at the peak. Predrill two holes to fasten the beam to the front and back pieces. Attach with two 1-1/4-inch deck screws. Be careful not to tighten the screws too much, or the wood may split.

12. You can use just about any type of strong chain or wire to hang this birdhouse. (We don't recommend rope or twine because it can break or be chewed by predators.) If you want to use two screw eyes and a chain like we did in the photo on page 15, use two small pliers to twist open the screw eyes.

Before adding the chain, screw the eyes into the outside roof beam between the galvanized screws. Then insert the ends of the chain into the screw eyes and close them with a pliers. Your barn is ready for some feathered "livestock"!